



## Superintendent's Update

November 23, 2016

Dear Shrewsbury Staff, Families & Community Members,

On the eve of the Thanksgiving holiday, please allow me to express my gratitude for what you do to provide our town's young people with an excellent education. My experiences around the district, especially recently, have reminded me how fortunate I am to be your superintendent. In my visits to classrooms, I have repeatedly witnessed exceptional teaching and learning, from our preschool to our high school. My conversations with principals during these school visits not only focus on what's going well, but also on challenges, and I am struck by how committed our administrators and educators are to working to support students who are struggling in order to help them meet with success.

Among what I've observed, I was particularly impressed by three recent achievements by our students:

- Yesterday, I witnessed several groups of 8th grade students from the 8 Blue team at Oak Middle School present sophisticated business "pitches" to panels of parent volunteers who are also business people, who then gave feedback to each student group on what they did well and what they could improve. The quality of the students' budget calculations and marketing plans was well beyond what I expected to see from 8th graders, and their presentation slides were truly professional. This learning endeavor built skills that our students will need for successful futures, and I agree with one of the parent panelists, who commented in an email, "I absolutely love the integration of the Math/ELA team focus to research, plan, and present what I would consider 'real world work!'"
- Saturday, I traveled to Westfield State University and enjoyed the SHS football team's huge [42-12 victory in the state semifinal](#), which has qualified them to play in the state final at Gillette Stadium on Saturday, December 3 at 6:00pm. It is clear that these student-athletes are not only skilled and calm under pressure, but they are also hard-working, team-first players who have represented our school and community with class. Good luck to the Colonials tomorrow morning in the annual Thanksgiving game at 10:15am at Wachusett Regional High School and in the upcoming state championship!
- The Oak Middle School fall play, *And a Child Shall Lead*, was one of the most moving student performances I've witnessed in my career. The ability of our 7th and 8th grade

actors to convey the poignancy of the story of the children who were imprisoned in the Terezin camp near Prague during the Holocaust was remarkable. Their preparation included meeting with a Holocaust survivor and a Boston Symphony Orchestra musician who researches the history of music and the arts that emerged from Terezin during that time, and it was clear to the audience that the performers captured the humanity and courage of what the children of Terezin did in the face of evil. To listen to our students' perspectives, [check out this preview video](#) that explains the story. Bravo to the cast and crew!

I am incredibly proud of all the students involved in these accomplishments. I also know that they wouldn't have been possible without the skill and dedication of their teachers, athletic coaches, and play directors and producers, nor would they have succeeded to this degree without the significant support of parents and the many volunteers who assist with these endeavors. I am indeed thankful for everything that all of you do to make our schools great places for our kids to learn and grow!

Please accept my best wishes for a wonderful Thanksgiving with family and friends!

Respectfully,

Joe Sawyer  
Superintendent of Schools

*Please note that the School Department office will be closed on Thursday and Friday for the Thanksgiving holiday.*